

March 8, 2023

Written testimony submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly **H.B. 6659- “An act concerning the state budget for the biennium ending June 30, 2025**

Hello distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, Chairs Osten and Walker, Vice Chairs Exum and Hartley and Ranking Members Berthel and Nuccio:

I am Ruth Alcabes and live in West Hartford. I’m a member of Congregation P’nai Or of West Hartford, and my congregation is a member of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA), a broad-based organization of 49 faith institutions working together on this issue.

I am testifying in support of a \$20 million dollar allocation over 2 years to community violence reduction efforts across the state. Although this amount was not specifically in the Governor’s budget, it is necessary and will save lives. Street outreach programs such as Hartford Communities That Care, Mothers United Against Violence, and Compass Youth Collaborative are associated with up to 37 percent reductions in gun injuries. However, funding for gun violence intervention and prevention in the state of Connecticut is not consistent enough to sustain these organizations and move the needle to end gun violence, and not consistent enough to allow the people who undertake the very difficult and important work to prevent gun violence to anticipate that they will be able to continue the work. Therefore, GHIAA is seeking funding from the state to support the work gun violence prevention and intervention organizations are doing on the ground, on the front lines.

The Connecticut Commission on Community Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention launched in August of this year through the Department of Public Health, and was tasked to distribute 2 million dollars to prevention and intervention organizations across the state. This is admirable, but it is not enough.

The Commission is made up of experts in their fields, appointed to serve by legislation passed in the 2022 legislative session. These experts include trauma surgeons, street level intervention specialists, public health professionals and those who have lost loved ones to violence. In their report, submitted to the legislature in January of this year, the Commission recommended that funding be allocated at the \$20 million dollar level over 2 years to provide continuity of resources and support. I have had the opportunity, through my participating in GHIAA’s gun violence research team committee, to hear the perspective of individuals working in the field, include people working with Hartford Communities that Care, Connecticut Against Gun Violence and academics conducting research in gun violence prevention, and this has led me to an increased understanding of the importance and potential effectiveness of the community violence prevention and intervention organizations should there be sufficient funding. This can allow more citizens of Connecticut to feel secure in their communities and contribute to the wellbeing of the state. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony, and thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Ruth Alcabes
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